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Command Structuring Amphibious Forces

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The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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Abstract of
COMMAND STRUCTURING AMPHIBIOUS FORCES

An analysis of recent deviations from joint amphibious doctrine by Navy commanders during the Grenada invasion and Beirut presence missions is presented, drawing on the author's firsthand experiences on the participating Commander Amphibious Task Force staff in those operations. The thesis is presented that current joint doctrine for amphibious doctrine was found inadequate to meet the demands of those recent amphibious operations. A proposal for the creation of a single Joint Amphibious Commander and staff within the Joint Chiefs of Staff organization to both plan and conduct the execution of the assault phases of future joint service assault operations is offered. The proposal argues that the nation requires a staff of assault experts colocated with the nation's crisis planning organizations to plan the assault phase of joint military actions, and that the same staff which plans such an operation then should become an operational staff tasked with executing the planned joint assault phase of joint operations. The goals foreseen are reducing present duplicative command efforts; closer linkage between Washington planning and field execution; and increased joint interoperations in assault actions.

PREFACE

The events described as occurring during the Grenada and Beirut amphibious operations were witnessed by the author while serving as Chief Staff Officer for the Commander Amphibious Task Force in both operations. While classified sources are referenced, no classified information is presented.

The body of literature examining recent amphibious operations from a command and control viewpoint is limited, with lack of authoritative examination of the effects upon amphibious doctrine of the emergence within the U.S. Navy of the Composite Warfare Commander concept of fleet operations, and a dearth of information on how best to meld air assault and amphibious assault capabilities. The conclusions and recommendations presented are those of the author.

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KEY WORDS

air assault

amphibious assault

amphibious warfare

amphibious command

assault

Beirut

command and control

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joint doctrine

Urgent Fury

COMMAND STRUCTURING AMPHIBIOUS FORCES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Procedures for waging war may change radically long before formal doctrines begin to reflect what has changed. One of these major and sudden changes recently occurred in U.S. limited amphibious operations. Doctrines of command relationships sacred since World War II and Inchon were swept away or ignored during the brief period of a single deployment. Command structures established in the trials and errors of Pacific island campaigns and subsequently codified in current joint service doctrine were replaced by a new approach to amphibious war command structuring. These events will be examined and a corrective solution proposed.

What happened in the press of combat in Grenada and in Beirut was that the Composite Warfare Commander (CWC) and the Commander Amphibious Task Force (CATF) had their first mutual combat experience. Since neither current joint amphibious¹ doctrine nor Navy CWC doctrine^{2,3} clearly address command relationships between the longstanding role of CATF and the emergent role of CWC, the Grenada and Beirut mutual combat experiences were almost certain to expose issues of command authority not covered in those extisting doctrines.

Procedures evolved in those combat encounters effectively

emasculated the doctrinal powers of that uniquely amphibious commander, the CATF. From the crucible of those recent amphibious combats, power and command authority shifted from commanders of small amphibious forces to adjacent CWCs.

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Amphibious doctrine is joint service doctrine. The identical doctrine appears in every service, carried in the following publications: Navy--NWP 22(B); Army-- FM 31-11; Air Force--AFM 2-53; and Marine Corps--LPM 01. It states that amphibious operations will be triggered by an Initiating Directive from the common superior of the two central players, the Navy (CATF) and his co-equal Army or Marine Corps Commander Landing Force (CLF). The joint doctrine requires that this vital Initiating Directive perform three essential functions in addition to setting forth the mission:

1. Describe command relationships between CATF and CLF, and among those officers and other participating commanders.

2. Establish the Amphibious Objective Area (the AOA). Within the AOA boundaries CATF has tactical command, or at least tactical control, of all friendly forces, including his main assault force, advance forces, escorts, naval gunfire support ships, and all air assets, including those performing close air support and task force defensive air patrols.

3. Set forth the supporting forces assigned to the operation, and explain command relationships by which their commanders will support the amphibious operation, both inside and beyond the AOA.

Armed with an Initiating Directive, and once in his Amphibious Objective Area, a CATF of any paygrade has unique and wide-ranging authority which cuts across functional and service boundaries. He commands or controls every friendly asset inside the AOA.

The standing doctrine assumes ample advance warning in which to plan, embark, rehearse and move an assault force to the objective area. It assumes enough time for the common superior to prepare and promulgate an Initiating Directive. Those assumptions have proved no longer applicable in today's quickstrike, limited size amphibious actions.

The thesis of this paper is that current amphibious doctrine no longer conforms to Navy command practices, that Navy commanders are deviating from joint amphibious operations doctrine in significant ways; and that creation of a single, joint, planning and executional staff represents a way to improve current doctrinal disconnects and interoperability during assault operations.

CHAPTER II

GRENADA DOCTRINAL DEVIATIONS

It was a short notice scenario which first brought Mediterranean Ready Group 1-84 and a CMC battle group together in combat in Grenada. From the start, doctrine failed to fit the facts of Operation Urgent Fury. Only 39 hours elapsed between the time Commander U.S. Second Fleet Vice Admiral Joseph Metcalf was appointed Commander Joint Task Force 120, the "common superior" responsible for issuing the Initiating Directive, and the assigned H-Hour of the actual assault.⁵ More complicating than the simple lack of time was the extra-ordinary complexity of the command interrelationships among the four services and peripheral special forces thrown together in Urgent Fury. Negotiating and describing command relationships among so many forces which had not previously fought together was complex beyond practicality in a planning window of only a few hours.

Nonetheless, Vice Admiral Metcalf's hastily assembled CJTF 120 staff of 37 officers did include a Marine Corps Colonel who diligently struggled to draft an Initiating Directive for Urgent Fury. That effort occupied his full attention until well into the day after the actual amphibious assault had occurred.

As no AOA had been established, and no CATF designated, there was no requirement to chop any supporting forces such as naval gunfire destroyers to CATF's tactical control. Even though his destroyers had been ordered in to support the amphibious task

force 60 miles away, Rear Admiral Richard Berry commanding the Independence battle group still had the comfort of full tactical command over them for possible recall in event of any emergent threat.

This arrangement had the effect that MARG Commander Captain Carl Erie was left without the assurance of tactical command over vital naval gunfire ship assets. However, Vice Admiral Metcalf's presence in the amphibious task force flagship, USS GUAM (LPH 9), was felt to protect against any sudden reassignment of those ships.

For the amphibious force, this aspect of Urgent Fury created a false sense of security regarding the loss of direct and total tactical command over its naval gunfire support while its Marines were engaged in combat ashore. What worked reasonably well as a Grenada expedient soon was to cause headaches when applied again the next month off Lebanon.

Other basic amphibious doctrinal principles were challenged during Urgent Fury.

In Urgent Fury, there were effectively two commanders of separate assault forces.⁶ With no single designated landing force commander established over the two forces ashore, both Army and Marines shared close air and naval gunfire support. This was perhaps the first time in U.S. naval history where an amphibious task force commander had been called upon to provide two distinct assault forces with simultaneous combat support. We were lucky

in Grenada that there was more than enough combat support available for the two independent assault forces. No hard choices had to be made. With sufficient assets to meet the limited demands for combat support made by both forces ashore, issues such as competition among commanders of different grades and services did not surface as factors in supporting arms and tactical air allocation. There is currently no doctrine to indicate how such choices should be made, except to avoid dual command structures.

Urgent Fury was remarkable for another unique facet of its command structure, one hardly noticed in the press of combat activity. For several hours when Vice Admiral Metcalf was called away from the scene, he deputized the senior Army liaison officer with his staff as Deputy Commander Joint Task Force 120, giving that officer temporary command of the entire joint task force. Thus, briefly, all naval forces in the Urgent Fury operation were actively in combat under the command of Army Major General Norman Schwarzkopf, Commanding General of the 24th Mechanized Division.⁷ His division was not part of the operation.

MARG 1-84 completed six separate amphibious evolutions during its eight days of combat operations in Urgent Fury. MARG Marines secured the capitol city and all principal towns and islands of Grenada before detaching on 2 November.⁸

CHAPTER III

BEIRUT DOCTRINAL DEVIATIONS

As in Grenada, there was also no Amphibious Objective Area established for Beirut. The absence of an AOA was an issue raised by each succeeding Sixth Fleet Amphibious Force commander from the time of the initial Beirut International Airport landing in assault formation over Green Beach in September 1982, when Vice Admiral William Rowden had been COMSIXTHFLT. In the rush to reestablish Marines ashore in Beirut following the refugee camp massacres, there had been 'no time' to issue a proper operation order or to define an AOA.

Off Beirut shortly after the November 1983 arrival of MARG 1-84, competition for available destroyers became intense as fears increased that terrorists might try to attack Sixth Fleet ships. This created a competition for destroyer types between screening requirements and gunline duty immediately off the Marines' position ashore.

The Sixth Fleet Commander, Vice Admiral Edward Martin, had directed only that the battleship USS NEW JERSEY (DE 62) and two destroyers, be maintained on the Beirut gunline. He did not specify what rules would govern subordinate numbered task force commanders in handing destroyers back and forth. In the absence of a formal AOA and its established doctrine covering such situations, the fleet commander's hands off approach left force allocation to be worked out ad hoc among on-scene commanders of

various paygrades and with different mission priorities. Lacking any formal AOA fence to protect the (junior) amphibious force commander's needs, destroyer assignments followed the desires of the senior flag officer in the Eastern Med, or his Anti-Surface Warfare Commander (ASUWC).

As it had been in Grenada, it developed similarly in the Sixth Fleet off Beirut that not having a defined AOA meant that battle force commanders did not need to actually 'chop' supporting gunships or aircraft assets to the (junior) Commander Sixth Fleet Amphibious Force (CTF 61). Thus, the same Captain Erie who could not gain command over amphibious fire support ships within the JTF 120 structure off Grenada found the same situation had developed half a world away in a different numbered fleet. Without an AOA, he was an amphibious force commander in name only, but he was not 'the CATF', and did not have a CATF's unity of amphibious command. Even the rapid escalation of hostilities to frequent and fierce exchanges, in which Marines ashore were largely dependent upon CTF 61's Supporting Arms Coordination Center for the swift coordination of all naval gunfire, did not bring a single smoking naval gun barrel off
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Beirut under his tactical command.

Destroyers under the tactical command of distant commanders were frequently rotated through fire support stations en route to or from other tasks. As many as three different shooters arrived or departed in a single day, making it most difficult to provide required pre-fire target briefings, or to conduct practice dry

run call fire missions. Satisfying every destroyer's natural desire for 'combat experience on the gunline' clearly competed with providing the most cohesive and experienced naval gunfire support team to the troops ashore.

With increased naval gunfire came skirmishing among the commanders in the Eastern Med over who would have his finger on the trigger of the naval guns for issuing 'batteries released' approval. At one point, Captain Erie (CTF 61) was directed to withhold counterbattery and suppressing fires from the gunships until he had obtained permission to shoot from the Commander Battle Force Sixth Fleet (CTF 60) Anti-Surface Warfare Coordinator (ASUMC), 40

11 miles seaward in USS TICONDEROGA (CG 47). That Flag officer had no target lists, no target photo intelligence support, no Supporting Arms Coordination Center for controlling naval gunfire, and no direct communications for monitoring spotter nets. Nonetheless, naval fire support decision authority was given to him in December 1983, rather than to the non-Flag rank Sixth Fleet Amphibious Force Commander with the tools for the job.

The result might have fulfilled the ultimate amphibious nightmare of every assault Marine--that when he calls for naval gunfire support, its approval might be denied by some distant Navy commander with no direct appreciation of his situation. That did not happen, but only because CTF 61 deliberately ordered the destroyers to fire whenever the Marines ashore called for fire missions. His stubborn resistance to efforts to limit naval

gunfire counterbattery release authority to senior commanders outside the immediate amphibious task force provoked sharp exchanges with several flag officers before the fleet commander reluctantly decided the issue in favor of his junior amphibious task force commander. Events had demonstrated that no other command structure could deliver requested fire support as well. The 22 MAU Marines ashore were relieved when this issue settled into the background in late January 1984.

A similar sort of scenario was played out at the same time regarding airspace control and the command and control of various mission categories of fixed wing aircraft, but without the same result. Airspace management over Beirut evolved away from an amphibious function, reflecting among other factors the inadequate battle management capabilities of the LPH amphibious flagship.

The final convolution of amphibious command in Beirut involved the JCS action splitting out the Marine force ashore from its theater and fleet chain of command. This was accomplished during January 1984 by the creation of the Joint Task Force Lebanon with Brigadier General Jim R. Joy as CJTFLEB. Commander Joint Task Force Lebanon certainly commanded one of the smallest and most unorthodox joint task forces in U.S. military experience. His force consisted only of those parts of the single battalion landing team ashore in Beirut, a few dozen U.S. Army personnel assisting in training Lebanese Army troops at remote sites, and various attachments which Marine battalions had

collected during their year ashore in Beirut. In all, this unique joint task force totaled about 1,700 men at most. On the direct issues of amphibious command, it is enough to note that creation of JTFLEB severed the last remaining threads of naval command over the Marine landing force in Beirut, while continuing to task the entire support of JTFLEB to the Sixth Fleet. Joint amphibious doctrine does not yet recognize the need for senior flag officer command presence even in small scale joint command structures.

It may need restating that Beirut was clearly an amphibious operation. Marines went ashore into Beirut International Airport in a tactical assault launched from the sea; received their entire support from their parent amphibious task force afloat close offshore; the landing force commander never formally shifted command ashore; and no termination of amphibious operations was ever signaled during the 16 month operation. The operation was ended with a classic amphibious withdrawal when the collapse of the Lebanese Army made the landing force positions ashore no longer militarily defensible. Other than the absence of a legitimizing Initiating Directive and the politically imposed static positions of the landing force, all elements of classical amphibious operations were present.

The erosion of jointly agreed amphibious command authority doctrinal principles which occurred within the Navy forces off Beirut reflects an obfuscation of the true amphibious nature of the Lebanon presence operation. It is worth noting that by April 1984, the Commander U.S. Sixth Fleet Amphibious Force (CTF 61) no

longer retained command authority over even the tactical movements of his ships. His ships for a time directly received individual nightly grid square operating area orders directly from the Sixth Fleet Battle Force (TF 60) Anti-Surface Warfare Commander (ASUWC). CTF 61 could not move ships from those assigned areas without prior ASUWC permission. This limitation on the tactical command authority of the amphibious task force commander was rationalized by the perceived need for a single East Med CMC to centrally control all ship movements for enhanced anti-terrorist defense. Amphibious ship movements toward and away from Green Beach for logistic support thus became another area where formerly amphibious force functions came under the direct tactical control of a remote CMC.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS

By the time of our withdrawal from Beirut, the primacy of Composite Warfare Commanders had emerged for the first time in amphibious combat as a dominant factor in reshaping amphibious command relationships. Periods of combat serve to sweep away cherished but perhaps outmoded concepts which may never be challenged in exercises.

These experiences suggest new structures for command of amphibious forces in the new kind of quick, joint service, joint air and amphibious assaults seen in Grenada and the contrived miniscule joint task force created to simplify amphibious command chains in Beirut.

Amphibious command authority erosion may continue so long as Flag officers in operational amphibious assault command billets do not go quickly to the scene of small assault operations to command participating amphibious forces. Five Flag and General officers participated personally in commanding the small Grenada assault. Admiral Metcalf has since stated frequently his belief that joint task force combat requires a three star officer and his staff, just to handle the volume of questions and data¹² required from above. Yet in neither Grenada nor Beirut did the Navy provide a flag level amphibious task force commander.

Assault warfighting has expanded beyond the narrow amphibious landing focus of the past, and it is no longer only a Navy-Marine Corps skill. Air assault capabilities have come of age. Assault forces of all our services are being mixed into joint tactical units with a variety unimaginable a few years ago. These mixed service forces can be assembled rapidly by the JCS under a joint task force commander of any service. He may or may not have an appreciation for amphibious doctrines. He will certainly have little time to set down formal operation orders or to provide wiring diagrams of command relationships. He will rely on his multiple stars for his own command authority and will expect all assigned forces to be instantly responsive and interoperable. He will expect subordinate task force commanders to be one or two star officers with their own self-contained command and control structures. He will have little tolerance for any distracting debates over who works for who, or how they are formally related to each other. The actual numbers or size of the joint force will be irrelevant to its command structure. Flag officers will be in command.

Adequate doctrine for Grenada-style joint assault task forces does not yet exist. Moreover, amphibious joint doctrine no longer is compatible with current Navy battle force command practices.

If memorandums of understanding are required to mesh a CATF and a CWC, then those agreements need to be jointly approved by all services. Current doctrine covers this point eloquently:

"There must be a clear understanding of mutual obligations and of the special capabilities of each component. These factors tend to create problems in preparation for an amphibious operation that are more extensive than for other types of military operations." 13

The increasingly joint service nature of forces committed in small war assaults needs to be recognized by naval warriors, both Navy and Marine Corps. Today's improved ability to make assaults by air over great distances can bring more than amphibiously launched Marines into a landing force role. However, the synergisms possible from increased jointness will not be realized so long as the underpinning doctrines are subject to ad hoc modifications by Navy battle force commanders.

As seen in Grenada, Army Generals may command joint task forces, and all services now call on each others' supporting arms capabilities. Agreed joint doctrine, joint procedures, interoperable communications and logistics for conducting such intertwined multi-service amphibious and assault operations are becoming more rather than less important. Amphibious ships increasingly will become the central suppliers of logistics, fire support coordination, close air support coordination, medical care and command and control facilities for fast reaction forces of all U.S. services. New doctrine which facilitates joint service use, of important national amphibious assets is needed now. Essential to that new doctrine will be defining, or redefining, command relationships with supporting Navy battle forces, and between assault forces of the different services.

CHAPTER V

RECOMMENDATIONS

The essence of the following recommendations is to restructuring our approach to commanding U.S. forces with assault or forcible entry capabilities. At present air assault and amphibious assault are doctrinally and practically seen as mutually exclusive operations within the exclusive purview of different services. This creates command and control barriers which can be overcome by the establishment of a joint command whose only charter is to conduct the initial assault phase of any U.S. forcible entry joint operation. This Joint Assault Commander (JAC) would not be a major force commander--he would be the provider of a specific command and control service: forcible assault of any type, for any theater or joint task force commander. As a temporary operational subordinate to the supported commander, JAC's charter would be limited in time to the periods immediately preceding and following the assault phase of any joint operation. With a charter limited in time rather than by space, as in current joint doctrine, competition for assets and parallel rather than joint air and amphibious assaults could be avoided. The concept of a single U.S. commander and a staff of all service assault experts tasked to achieve the initial forcible entry of any assault phase of any joint operation recognizes realities ignored in the current situation:

- * Army and Special Operations Command air assault capabilities, and slower but better sustaining naval amphibious

capabilities, are both complimentary variants of a single national military capability, that of forcible entry assault.

* Since current amphibious doctrine was created, air assault has matured into a potent capability capable of as global a reach for forcible entry assault as more traditional amphibious capability.

* The ad hoc nature of ^{the} Grenada invasion joint command precluded truly joint, integrated operations by the committed assault elements. The lack of a permanently staffed operational Joint Assault Commander and his staff forced us to conduct two distinct and not mutually supported assault operations on an island only 20 miles long.

Recommendations for restructuring joint amphibious command doctrine follow:

The Joint Assault Commander Concept

This concept replaces the term 'CATF' with a title much more narrowly focused upon directing the assault action, rather than the past focus upon command of forces within geographic areas. In CATF's stead, a new three star billet would be created subordinate to the CJCS for an officer to be known as the Joint Assault Commander (JAC). JAC's mission will be to provide both planning and execution command and control services for the full range of assault operations conducted by U.S. forcible entry forces. The Joint Assault Commander would not himself serve as the joint or naval commander of a campaign or of any operations which followed an initial assault. Instead, JAC

would be staffed across service lines to provide theater, joint task force and naval task force commanders with a unique service: the planning, coordination and execution of only THE ASSAULT PHASE of all joint operations, anywhere in the world they may be required.

As the provider of a service, JAC would first serve the CJCS as a member of his Washington staff in concept planning of assault actions. He would then immediately take his mobile staff on scene to be attached as a principal but temporary subordinate to either a theater commander, a joint task commander, or a naval force commander, to conduct the actual joint assault phase action which he had helped plan.

JAC should be a three star flag officer, in recognition of his need to exercise command functions over amphibiously based and battle force supported assault actions. His three principal subordinates would be Army and Marine Corps flag officers with expertise in their service's assault practices, and a Navy flag officer with recent amphibious command experience. Senior experts from the MAC, TAC, SOC and MSC communities would round out the leadership core of the JAC headquarters staff. This Joint Assault Command leadership core would serve a jointly manned, Washington based, assault planning and executing staff.

Between operations, his principal field assistants would be assault element commanders from all services, functioning in a dual hatted role. For example, the two Navy Amphibious Group Commanders, one in each fleet, would report for additional duty to JAC to support JAC in integrating Navy amphibious forces,

communications and equipments into the assault phase of joint operations. COMSOC would acquire similar responsibilities, as would the 82nd Airborne and 101st Air Assault Division Commanders, the Marine Amphibious Brigade Commanders, and appropriate Air Force special mission Wing Commanders. Each would support JAC staffing and planning to insure their operational capabilities and requirements were best reflected in assault plans, and each could expect to be tasked as a direct JAC operational subordinate commander during assault phase execution, whenever their forces were involved. This relationship would insure all key assault players knew each other, and each others' capabilities and limitations.

JAC would execute command authority over forces beyond his own headquarters staff only during the few hours or days immediately prior to, during, and after the conduct of an assault operation. During this period he would act for, and directly support, either the theater commander, joint task force commander, or naval force commander conducting the campaign in which the assault occurred. As soon as the immediate assault action was completed, he would relinquish command to his supported commander. He could either depart immediately, or remain with his staff in an assisting/ coordinating role until released by the supported commander. The JAC staff's expertise across service lines and with both MAC and SAC experts in house should provide an exceptional post assault improvement in joint logistics management and interdependence.

JAC would maintain subordinate staff cells with each

theater commander both to provide assault planning expertise and to insure interoperability of theater commander forces in joint assaults.

Joint assault doctrine would replace joint amphibious doctrine, and JAC would author that doctrine. Recognizing that assault forces can be delivered by air and supported by sea, or vice versa, joint assault doctrine would remove the narrow amphibious definitional limits on what force may constitute a 'landing force'. While broadening past 'amphibious' doctrines to include air assault tactics, the new doctrine would also broaden air assault doctrine to maximize interoperability with amphibious forces. It would limit the period that any assault force would come under the JAC integrated command structure to the briefest period necessary to accomplish an assault.

Within this framework, JAC could support almost any command structure created within theater or joint task force frameworks, and avoid protracted debate about relative command seniorities or roles. JAC simply provides a service--planning and executing joint assaults-- to user commanders as required. He maximizes integration of all services' contributions to the assault by his dual hatting planning relationship with the same commanders in all the services who will, briefly, act as his direct subordinates during the short period of actual assault execution. His staff will be a joint assault team which has trained and planned together, and is expert in the strengths, equipments and methods of all the services' assault force elements. His staff will

have worked and planned in concert with the same forces employed in execution the assault. He will have the advantage of focusing narrowly upon his assault mission, freeing the theater, JTF or naval campaign commander to look beyond the complexities of the immediate assault problem.

Freed of contentious geographic AOA boundaries, JAC can tailor the tasking he will require of supporting naval battle groups or forces, and of supporting MAC and TAC forces as well, in mission support terms rather than in command chop terms. Command and control relationships can be smoothed by joint doctrine agreement that all forces engaged in, or directly supporting, a joint assault will be under JAC command during a designated time period (rather than in a geographic AOA) in which the assault will occur. Since JAC will be an immediate subordinate of either a theater or designated JTF commander, questions concerning his authority such as are now cropping up between battle force commanders and junior CATFs, should be minimized. JAC's three star rank should limit encroachment by Navy battle group commanders into joint command and control functions essential to an assault commander.

The single JAC Washington headquarters recognizes that the U.S. need be staffed to conduct only one joint assault at a time, but that it can occur anywhere in the world. JAC will serve to provide the first team experts in conducting those assaults, and will be capable of rapid national level planning, quick air deployment to the scene, and optimum melding of all service assault elements in the actual assault. He should be able to

function as Joint Assault Commander equally well in Grenada scenarios or in larger joint assaults such as envisioned in the in the CENTCOM region. As a joint commander, he need not become involved, unless tasked, in single service or special operations forces operations, or purely naval small amphibious assaults or exercises. JAC would, however, receive significant training and practice in conducting joint assaults by exercising assault phase command in such annual joint assault exercises as Atlantic Command's Solid Shield series.

The Joint Assault Commander concept for a single standing assault planning and executing staff for joint assaults which blend air and sea assault forces, has peripheral attractions as well.

JAC resolves the question of who will act as CATF in MAF size amphibious assaults by providing a trained three star commander able to conduct a MAF assault in support of whoever is the designated theater or campaign commander. JAC may even be able to suggest additional joint assault capabilities which might enhance the MAF assault without complicating the structure of the subsequent landing force command.

JAC and his Washington based operational staff will provide a much needed central focal point for amphibious assault matters which fall in the gray areas between services. He will undoubtedly enhance the overall utility to the nation of such assets as the Maritime Prepositioning Ships, our fragmented logistics over the shore effort, our connectivity

in assault communications, our ability to better employ and integrate special forces into conventional assault actions, and he will offer the nation expertise in assaulting hostile shores and territories which cuts across transportation method loyalties. Most importantly, the Joint Assault Commander standing joint operational staff concept presented here offers the first way to successfully avoid the Grenada pitfall, where on a small 20 mile island, two almost totally separate assaults had to be conducted for lack of a standing joint assault commander, adequate joint assault doctrine and lack of a single assault planning staff which could also quickly deploy to execute the joint assault.

Some of past amphibious doctrine has valuable future utility for limited amphibious assault operations. Much is cumbersome, or plainly obsolete. Examples of the results of inaction in the face of change have been provided, along with suggestions for a new doctrinal framework. The time for all four services to decide, jointly, what to preserve or build upon from their amphibious heritage is now, in the lull before the next balloon goes up.

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